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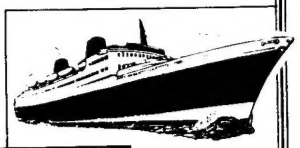

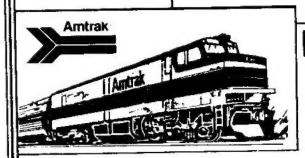

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LETTERS

(The following letter was addressed to Adron Hall:)

Thank you for your letter of May 31, 1983 referring to single-unit operation on the CRESCENT. We have found that the cutoff operation at Atlanta has helped to reduce operating costs on this route.

On January 13, Train 19 was the first train to cut off cars from the rear and the locomotive unit from the headend. Since then, on-time performance between New Orleans and Washington has averaged 89.8%. One-unit operations in excess of 500 miles are not unique to our system. For example, Trains 25 and 26 operate 1,082 miles between Salt Lake City and Seattle with one unit and maintain an average on-time performance of 90%.

In the case of Train 20 on May 14, the speedometer failed on Unit 256, as you have noted, but a two-unit operation would not have decreased the delay of 67 minutes. Had Train 20 operated with two units, it would have been necessary to switch the units, incurring substantial delay. The Metroliner Service initially ran from New Haven to Boston with two units for a short period of time due to the new high-speed schedule. Once assured on-time performance could be maintained with one unit, the two-unit operation was discontinued.

Considering our modern equipment fleet, we feel confident that good service can be provided with a minimal number of locomotives. Our minimization of operating costs, consistent with good train performance, goes a long way to ensure Amtrak's viability in the future.

W. Graham Claytor, Jr., President
Amtrak
Washington, D.C.

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ON THE COVER

The modern and the antique side-by-side. Amtrak's southbound SILVER STAR, train 81, in Richmond VA on July 17, alongside the steam-powered "Richmond Special" which arrived only moments ahead of the Amtrak train. The steam excursion was the 150th of the Old Dominion Chapter of NRHS. The train was powered by the ex-S&A 750 in the photo and by N&W class J 611. Photo by Wray Dudley.

Duane Roller's article on the Oaxaca train (RTN 268) brought back many nostalgic memories of two Mexico-Oaxaca round trips five or ten years ago, and he has caught perfectly the atmosphere of the mad rush to board the train at Oaxaca.

I remember discovering with great disappointment that only one of seven lights in our bedroom worked. However, along about 2am the car hit undoubtedly the roughest stretch of the entire trip and the other six came on!

One thing Mr. Roller missed. The morning run into Oaxaca down the valley is one of the most beautiful in all Mexico. The Marquis de Valle Hotel in Oaxaca is a reminder that this is the area Cortez picked as the most desirable in all Hispanic America.

John V. Fels
Phoenix, Arizona

Duane Roller's account of Mexican train travel brought back memories of a 1981 trip on the same trains. In our case, the stone-throwing youngsters were not at Oaxaca but at Torreon, where the dining car steward drew all the window blinds as protection. And in our case the Oaxaca train was not just 1½ hours late, but 5 hours. This was a blessing in disguise, tho, because our was a southbound trip and the lateness enabled us to see and photograph all the magnificent scenery we otherwise would have slept thru.

John H. Schmidt
Des Moines, Iowa

I have to agree with Barren Steenburger (RTN 270): for all W. Graham Claytor's "gloss" and "glory", I detect a fox in the hen house, also!

It is no secret that the Reagan Administration has tried long and hard to dump Amtrak, and yet, the direct approach has proven futile because "there are actually people out there who still want to ride trains, by God!" and we have told them so.

Maybe some of my fellow readers will recall San Francisco's Save the Cable Car battles of the 1950s. The Mayor, commissioners and PUC set out to "improve" the Muni transit system. One of their proposals was to eliminate the entire cable car system. They soon found the opposition too heavy to fight.

Now was the time for a little "double-think." "We'll make it sound like the people are really getting something, and we still will end up accomplishing what we set out to do, anyway!"

The people of S.F. ended up with a truncated cable system in which a couple of their most interesting and scenic lines were dropped. Is this an example of what Amtrak has in mind for us?

Making formerly manned rail stations just "bus stops" will have a very detrimental effect on patronage. A passenger's first impression of Amtrak is what he encounters at a railroad station.

Is there anybody in Amtrak's upper echelon who really cares anything about the rail passenger or passenger train?

Orvis D. Scott
Gallup, New Mexico

North Florida isn't the deserted wasteland Ted Blishak seemed to see (RTN 269). Perhaps he is too citified to understand lumbering, cattle and citrus groves. And

he managed to move Winter Haven 50 miles north to Winter Park. To see "travel brochure" Florida from rail anywhere north of W. Palm Beach, hop an FEC freight. Amtrak selected the backwoods tracks.

Robert Clark
Sanford, Florida

RAIL CANADA

VIA RAIL'S FUTURE was the subject of a new major economic study released by Transport 2000 Canada on July 26. The study, entitled "An analysis of the economic impact of bi-level equipment on VIA transcontinental services", had as a key conclusion that a $216 million investment in re-equipping Canada's transcontinental passenger trains would be paid back in only 6.4 years, from the reduction in annual operating costs. "The prime option for VIA Rail is to order two-story bi-level passenger cars," said Guy Chartrand, National President of Transport 2000 Canada. "These would dramatically increase passenger loadings per car, increase revenues, increase reliability and comfort, and sharply reduce costs. Operational costs could be reduced by as much as 33%. Passenger capacity per sleeper could rise by as much as 95% and for coaches by 39%." VIA currently operates transcon trains with cars that are 30 to 40 years old. They are expensive to maintain, often unreliable, and urgently need replacement. In 1981, when transport minister Jean-Luc Pepin cut 20% of the VIA national system, he said that the transcon trains would continue and that the money saved from the cuts would purchase new equipment. "This study delineates the choices VIA is facing," said Mr. Chartrand. "VIA can demonstrate its will to serve the nation and to give improved economic performance by ordering new rolling stock, now. To let the situation deteriorate any further would be bad economics and an abuse of the trust of Canadians." Both the traveling public and VIA's financial performance will immediately benefit once these trains are in place. The benefits extend much further. There are Canadian corporations which are competent to build this equipment, and that means industrial expansion, jobs, technological advances, and the potential for healthy exports. Many communities across the country will find that they once again have reliable and comfortable trains for their citizens, and also for attracting tourism. With such events as Expo 86 in Vancouver, the transcon services could be a showcase for Canadian technology, Transport 2000 said.

NEW YORK-MONTREAL high-speed train agreement reported last issue, among the governments of Quebec, Vermont and New York, has generated the following follow-up actions among the participants: (1) In August, Quebec will interview drivers at border customs stations, with a view to determining potential users of high-speed NY-Montreal train service; (2) New York and Vermont will use a subsidy from the FRA to finance a study of traveler traffic; (3) The participants will also assess the potential economic spinoff from a high-speed rail link, and will examine this link within the context of development of economic relations; (4) The steering committee will be made up of representatives selected by each of the governments, and will be entrusted with directing the study, which will take place in the coming months.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND STATIONS at Haileybury and Cobalt were closed as of June 30, and passengers must buy tickets on the train.

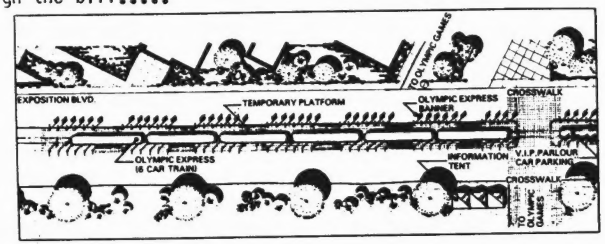
VIA RAIL TRAIN 58 left Toronto on time (11:35pm) Friday, Jul 15, and reached Scarborough before having to return to Union Station because of bad wheels on the locomotive. While awaiting a replacement unit, the air conditioning in one of the assigned ex-CP Budd sleepers failed, causing further delay in finding a replacement for that car. Ex-CN, ex-U.S. Army sleeper "Grand Cordroy River" was attached to the rear. The train left Toronto for a second time at 2:47am, arriving Belleville at 4:59 and Cornwall at 7:44am. (As is usually the case, only one F9 unit was assigned the train, despite its being 10 cars long, giving little chance to make up lost time.) Critics called this a typical instance of how well CN and CP "maintain" VIA equipment despite charging high prices for doing so.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRAIN to Chicago became Amfleet every day in both directions as of Jul 13, for the next two months. Consist will be two Amcoaches and one Amdinette. GTW crews mentioned much trouble with both cars and locomotives on alternate days when Tempo equipment and LRC locomotives ran. The Amdinette with table seating was also welcomed on the route.

RAIN WASHED OUT the Trans-Canada Highway for two weeks, according to a July 13 report. The CP Railway was out for two days or so. Automobile tourists were diverted a long way around the Revelstoke-Golden section. CP Rail's 20 to 24 daily freights were stalled, and VIA Rail passengers were being flown between Calgary and Kamloops. CNR had three washouts. Rain led to heavy slides in mountains.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

DOT FUNDING BILL for FY 84, finally passed by Congress on Aug 3, includes about $400 million for new transit systems: L.A., Portland OR, Miami, Detroit and San Jose. The $10.9 billion compromise bill is $367.7 million less than the House originally voted, and $18.7 million more than Reagan wanted. Reagan has said that he will sign the bill.....



PROPOSED OLYMPICS TRAIN to run between UCLA and USC, a distance of 10.8 miles, in Los Angeles next summer for the '84 Olympic Games, seems to have encountered no serious opposition yet. Drawing above is of a 6-car train at the USC terminus of the line, which would connect five Games sites in its run on SP tracks along Exposition and Sepulveda Boulevards. County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn went so far as to suggest that the train remain permanently after the Games as one of L.A.'s mass transit assets. A $4 ticket price would be charged, and $7 at parking lots, enabling the operation to break even financially. The Olympic Organizing Committee has offered no monetary help with the plan. About a half-mile of new track would have to be built. A detailed plan is now being prepared.

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD and four unions reached an agreement at the last minute on Aug 3, averting a strike. Management withdrew its demand that outside contractors could be hired to do some routine maintenance work.

BROOKLYN SUBWAY TRAINS using the Manhattan Bridge will be delayed during August by construction work on the 74-year old bridge. Delays will continue thru October.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT directors on Aug 3 okayed fare increases for rail and bus beginning Sep 1. The fare boosts average 8 percent.

BART DIRECTORS APPROVED on Aug 4 a planning policy which entails a 30% fare increase within 2½ years, but promised that the number of rush-hour trains would go up 74%, that train headways would be reduced, and that on-time performance be 98%.

SOUTH SHORE LINE wants a 9.5% fare increase to take effect in September.

HOLLYWOOD BOWL STATION plan would endanger L.A. subway funding, a Covina Congressman warned in late July.

The Damndest Ticket I Ever Wrote

WHEN MILEAGE COLLECTOR MEETS TRAVEL AGENT

by John H. Emery

Almost every time we talk, my travel agent tries to sell me a ticket on the Trans-Siberian Railway.

"It'll be easier to write than that crazy Canadian thing we did," he declares. "Damndest ticket I ever wrote!"

The "Canadian thing" WAS a glorious production: Fifteen VIA trains, three buses, a Nova Scotia-Newfoundland ferry round trip and assorted sleeping accommodations. A mileage-collector's tour de force even the late "Frimbo" would have been proud of. However, the Great Man, in all his writings, never mentioned how much easier it is to execute the game plan when you have a travel agent who has a computer. And that's the whole point of this story.

If you're as naive about travel agents as I was, it's understandable. When you have mastered the Railway Guide as an adolescent, there's no mystery at all to the Airline Guide when you become a business traveler. Since fares are no consideration, you pick the flights that are most convenient and ask the travel desk to book them for you. You book some business travel on Amtrak to get the traffic manager used to the idea and, with luck, he or she will then also book your personal tickets as well.

What jolted ME out of the "pick 'em yourself" rut was my sudden separation from the corporate world. No more company traffic desk to call on. Here I was planning a tour of Mexico and needing flights to rail connections at Dallas and El Paso. Following my usual custom, I walked into a travel agent's office, asked permission to study his Airline Guide, took some notes, and left. Next day, I returned and asked for tickets on this flight south, that flight north.

"If you're sure these are the flights you want, I can do it in a minute or two," he said. "But if you're not in a hurry, perhaps we can save some money."

"Be my guest, George," said I.

Tappeta-tappeta-TAP went George's fingers. He got hours of enjoyment, he said, playing "minimum fare" games on his computer.

"Since you're flying from Chicago to Dallas to take a train to Laredo," he said with a puzzled look, "you obviously have time to spare." (I was his first mileage collector. It took a while to explain that I'd already ridden the INTER-AMERICAN's Dallas-Chicago leg on a business trip, but still needed Dallas-Laredo.) As we talked, numbers started popping onto the computer screen.

"Now if you're willing to spend an hour or two in St. Louis," he told me, "we'll save some real dough." Done. That took care of Dallas. Getting home from El Paso would be a little more complicated. I'd have to fly American--at a non-discount fare--at least back to Dallas. But if I didn't mind killing two hours there...

The Ozark "puddle-jumper" tickets George wrote cost about $80 less than the flights I'd picked on my own--and I became a believer in travel agents. (Something else I learned that day: Some airlines reserve gourmet meals for selected customers. While the person next to me in coach was nibbling a sandwich, I'd be lunching on chilled lobster.)

Later, I'd learn that booking even a simple one-way Amtrak reservation was best handled by letting George do it. He had a non-listed, agents-only number to call; I didn't. He could charge my tickets to my credit card over the phone and mail them to me. And, of course, his service cost me nothing.

By the time we sat down to write the great Canadian caper, George proved how well he'd learned the game. The trip also involved five Amtrak trains and a Philadelphia-Washington run behind #611 on the CHESSIE SAFETY EXPRESS.

Noting a reservation request for Montreal-Philadelphia and a second ticket Washington-New York, George politely inquired about the gap. I explained about 611 and the Chessie Special.

"Let me know if it's coming to Chicago again," he asked. "I'd like to try it. In the meantime, what if..."

Tappeta-tappeta-tap went the fingers again. No, George said, buying a round-trip excursion ticket and wasting part of it wouldn't save me anything. But he thought he'd try.

The itinerary had taken me two weeks to put together. George couldn't find a hotel where I wanted to stay in Newfoundland, and, for some reason, the CN ferries also eluded him. Otherwise, his and VIA's computers could write everything but 611 for me. In about a half-hour of my time.

Let George do it, indeed!

THE ITINERARY

Day 1: Chicago-Westchester County (NY) Airport, Air Florida. (Client to arrange local transportation and hotel.)
Day 2: Coach, NY-Montreal, ADIRONDACK. Roomette, Montreal-Matapedia, Que., OCEAN.
Day 3: Round trip Matapedia-Gaspe, VIA Dayliner. Roomette, Matapedia-Montreal, OCEAN.
Day 4: Lower berth, Montreal-Toronto, CAVALIER.
Day 5: Toronto-Niagara Falls NY, MAPLE LEAF. VIA coach seats Niagara Falls Ont.-Burlington West-London-(Stratford)-Toronto. Lower berth Toronto-Sudbury North on SUPER CONTINENTAL.
Day 6: Coach seat on CANADIAN, Sudbury-Franz, Ont. Lower berth, Franz-Montreal.
Day 7: VIA coach tickets Montreal-Riviere-a-Pierre, Que., then Riviere-a-Pierre -Ste. Foy. Lower berth, Levis-Montreal.
Day 8: Holiday Inn reservation, Halifax.
Day 9: Halifax-N. Sydney, N.S., VIA Dayliner. (Client to provide own ticket on CN car ferry to Newfoundland.)
Day 10: Terra Transport coach, Port-au-Basques-Gander-Bishops Falls, Nfd.
Day 11: Bishops Falls-Corner Brook, Nfd. Terra Transport coach, Corner Brook-Port-au-Basques. (Client to provide own ferry ticket.)
Day 12: N. Sydney-Truro, N.S., VIA Dayliner. Roomette Truro-Montreal, ATLANTIC.
Day 13: Coach seat, Montreal-Philadelphia, MONTREALER.
Day 14: Washington-NY, coach, NIGHT OWL. (Client to provide own transportation Philadelphia-Washington.)
Day 15: Slumbercoach, NY-Chicago, LAKE SHORE LIMITED.
(Not shown: approximately 250 miles of NY area commuter lines.)

What's Doing at Beech Grove

A Look at Amtrak's Repair & Maintenance Shops

Amfleet coach 21024 has been equipped with experimental dual brakes--both the regular disc and new tread brakes, which are expected to reduce shelling of wheels.

Coaches 4736 and 4738 arrived Jun 26 for a 2-year maintenance check.

Sleeper 2467 was released from the Beech Grove shops on Jun 27.

Amcoach 21210 arrived at Beech Grove Jun 28 for overhaul, as did 20673.

Cars 32053 & 31036 arrived Jun 29 for overhaul.

Dome 9362 was in storage yard in early July, supposed to be rebuilt for auto ferry. Dome 9365 "River View" on Jul 5 was being stripped prior to rebuilding--most likely will be the first "View" series car to be rebuilt for the auto ferry. Dome 9361 "Ocean View" is also in storage awaiting rebuilding for auto ferry.

Dome 9477 (ex-9407), coach 4738 and sleeper 2202 "Silver Thrush" (ex-2221) are being rebuilt in Beech Grove shop #1. Cars 21724 and 2252 "Star Leaf" (ex-2232) are being stripped prior to rebuilding, as is dome 9465 (ex-9409).

Sleeper 2265 "Placid Scene" (ex-2235) is being stripped for rebuilding.

Dome observation 9521 "Silver Penthouse" is in storage but is believed to be headed for rebuilding soon. Dome 9364 "Prairie View" is expected to be rebuilt for the auto ferry.

Car 34016 is in the shops for overhaul, and has wreck damage.

Domes 9471 and 9475 are both awaiting shopping.

Amfleet car 20003 is in for an overhaul.

Seventy-two Amfleet I cars have been selected for major overhaul and enhancement. They will be assigned exclusively to Metroliner service, and will be given new car numbers. A 6-car Metroliner train will consist of one dinette, one club car and four coaches. The cars will receive a 3-year overhaul to ensure ride quality and reliability of performance. Some of the improvements are: (1) interior design: installation of new carpet, seat covers and drapes; (2) passenger signs: changes in illuminated directional information signs; (3) exterior treatment: special Metroliner logo and reflective white Scotchlite stripes; (4) toilets: new vapor air operated toilets; (5) brakes: installation of dual brakes (see above); (6) air conditioning: complete refurbishing and overhaul. Cars selected for the program are 43 coaches from the 21800-21889 series, 13 clubs from the 20670-20682 series, and 12 dinettes from the 20200-20233 series. All these cars will be assigned a new series unit number as follows: 47 coaches 21900-21989 (randomly numbered); 13 clubs 20970-20982; 12 dinettes 20905-20916.

Engine 284 was released from the diesel shop on Jun 22. Unit 220 was released Jun 28 from the paint shops and from wreck repairs--it was one of two units burned in SAN DIEGAN service. Units 332 and 371 are awaiting shopping, and have bad wreck damage. Ex-F units 492 and 377 are being dismantled. Unit 292 released in early July with fresh paint and overhaul. Engine 231 is in the diesel shop for overhauling. Engine 260 is awaiting repairs of wreck damage. GE engine 722 is to be rebuilt for auto ferry service. Engines 313, 700, 281 and 325 are in for repair of wreck damage. Unit 248 arrived Jul 6 for overhaul.

The shops are presently taking 45 days to do locomotive overhauls, and will do 34 locomotives this year and next.

Locomotive 242 arrived for overhaul the week of Jul 18. Unit 231 was expected to be released from Beech Grove on Jul 25 or 26. Two engines in the 300-series were pulled from the dead line in late July and moved into the shops, where they had their diesel engines and related components removed.

The first two Breda cars for the Washington transit system were loaded on special flatcars on July 22 for shipment from Beech Grove.

As of July 22, two tri-level auto carriers have been painted platinum mist and had stripes applied, but no numbers or "Amtrak" lettering yet. These are, of course, for the auto ferry service.

Jinxed Again!

by H. John Pertersen

On June 18 my wife and I boarded Amtrak train 7, the EMPIRE BUILDER, in the St. Paul depot. We did so with some trepidation, for we had been trying for three years to make this trip. Two years ago a practical joker called Amtrak and cancelled my reservations. Last year just one week before our trip, my wife was transferred to a new boss who wouldn't allow her to leave her job. This year we made reservations under an assumed name, and the job was no longer a problem. But we had been subject to a series of bad luck episodes on various trips. We had been on an EMPIRE BUILDER that was stopped outside Milwaukee and the train evacuated while a bomb search was made. We were on the NORTH STAR when the engine died 13 miles out of Duluth. Just last year I was on a CARDINAL that was (1) detoured twice due to freight derailments, and (2) ran out of fuel in the mountains of W. Virginia.

Now, boarding the EMPIRE BUILDER, our hearts sank when the conductor at first acted as if our room had been double-sold. However, it wasn't, and we relaxed a bit.

We decided to skip breakfast the first morning out, since we wanted to sleep in and because my wife is allergic to eggs and pancakes and Amtrak won't sell her just ham and toast. But we arose earlier than planned, and we were both downstairs washing up when the jinx hit. Everything was going fine when Bam, Bounce, Boom--the car gave a mighty lurch and ballast started a nonstop pounding on the underside of the car. "We're on the ground!" I thought. Frantically opening the door of the bathroom so I wouldn't be trapped inside if the car overturned, I yelled to my wife to open her door.

Stepping out into the corridor, I decided we were still on the rails. Down the corridor, the sleeping car porter was sitting on the floor, his back braced up against the wall and his head bowed with his arms wrapped protectively around his head. He obviously expected us to derail. Then the rear brakeman appeared. He had no radio, but he reached up and stabbed two times the Conductor Call Button which was supposed to connect him to the engine. Nothing happened. Again he hit the button, and again no response. Then he went to the train P.A. system and called "Rear Brakeman to Conductor--have the engineer stop the train; repeat please have the engineer stop the train, before the next switch if possible!" Now something

started happening. The Conductor apparently heard him and radioed the engineer, who began a hard stop. As soon as we stopped, the brakeman opened the door and ran forward. He was soon joined by the Conductor and Head Brakeman. Looking out, I could see that we were still on the rails, and now the crew gathered around the front south truck of our car. I could hear "Thank God we stopped before we got to the switch" being spoken.

Soon the crew returned and broke into the heavy tool compartment, then returned to the truck, where the fireman joined them. The porter provided the crew with some sheets to lie on to protect their clothing. After much banging, the crew finally got whatever had fallen (I learned later that it was the brake rigging) up and out of the way. We then proceeded at 30mph to Stanley ND where a BN work crew was to meet us.

We reached Stanley only 30 minutes late. The BN crew looked at the problem, shook their heads and returned to their truck. Meanwhile, it began raining hard. The operating crew obtained some baling wire from the BN work crew and proceeded, in the driving rain, to wire up the brake rigging. Apparently they did a good job, because as soon as we left Stanley, about an hour late, we started to move out at 79mph. I give the BN operating crew an A+ for their professionalism in handling the matter with a minimum of delay. On the other hand, everyone on the train heard the rear brakeman asking the conductor to get the train halted before the next switch, but no further explanation was given the passengers thru the P.A. system.

At Havre, where we arrived on time, the car, which had a list to the left, was removed from the train. A replacement was added later at Spokane.

Later that night I reflected upon the events of the day. The one question that kept nagging me was what would have happened if the rear brakeman had not appeared

(continued on page 16)

Knocking the Spirit Out of California

California Governor George Deukmejian in signing the state's fiscal 84 budget (for the fiscal year started July 1), exercised his power to line-item veto unwanted funding and eliminated the state's appropriation for the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA, fulfilling a campaign debt to Southern Pacific. The action was predicted well ahead of July, as the new governor's men let it be known immediately upon his election that they wanted the SPIRIT and the SAN JOAQUINS out of existence. The drawing at right, of Deukmejian about to ax the SPIRIT, appeared on RTN's second January issue this year.

* * *

On July 22, the National Association of Railroad Passengers issued the following press release: "Ignoring an encouraging upturn in traffic, Gov. Deukmejian vetoed FY '84 funding for the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA, the overnight train between Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Sacramento. The last runs will be Sept. 30.

"The SPIRIT, jointly funded by Caltrans and Amtrak, stops at Davis, Suisun-Fairfield, Martinez, Richmond, Oakland, San Jose, Salinas, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Oxnard, and Glendale. The train is linked to San Francisco both by dedicated connecting buses at Oakland, and--at San Jose--by Caltrain service thru San Mateo county. It is linked to Chico and Marysville by dedicated buses at Sacramento, and to Pasadena, Pomona, and San Bernardino by dedicated buses at Glendale.

"May ridership and revenues were up 18.1% and 3.7% respectively, from May 1982. May 'passenger-miles-per-train-mile" (average number on board thruout the run) were up 7.5%. Preliminary figures indicate June ridership was up 28.8%. Thru the first ten days of July, ridership was about 20% above the same days last year.

"The Governor's action seems particularly untimely in view of:

--the need for as many alternatives to the automobile as possible during the Olympics to be held in Los Angeles next summer;

--the above-noted ridership increases which came in spite of no advertising by Caltrans or Amtrak;

--the fact that intense airline price wars, which have now abated, and the recession, prevented the train from realizing stronger ridership patterns in earlier months; and

--the time and money California and Amtrak poured into the effort to force Southern Pacific to allow operation of the SPIRIT. (California will lose the fruits of a three-year legal battle as the result of a budget decision made just over one year after the train's late-October 1981 inauguration.)

"Caltrans' negative attitude towards the SPIRIT is reflected in their incredible refusal to spend just $5000 to permit the train to stop at Gilroy. Southern Pacific refused to allow stops at Van Nuys and Simi Valley, even tho state taxpayers had already funded construction of platforms and parking lots. The SPIRIT was also hurt by Amtrak's failure to provide good connecting service to San Diego, a problem which stood a good chance of being solved in October if the governor had decided to keep the SPIRIT.

"The National Association of Railroad Passengers and Citizens for Rail California, non-profit consumer-oriented membership groups, HAVE been advertising the train in recent months, which partly explains why ridership has improved. NARP solicited funds from its membership nationwide, reflecting the importance of the service.

"Loss of the SPIRIT will hurt the financial performance of the L.A.-San Diego route, where three of seven daily round-trips are partially funded by the state. SAN DIEGANS will lose connecting traffic from the SPIRIT and will be charged with a higher percentage of costs at Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal and the L.A. maintenance base. These factors may push the SAN DIEGANS under the governor's 55% revenue-to-cost ratio threshold, forcing discontinuance of the state-supported trains. The governor has already indicated he would kill the Oakland-Bakersfield SAN JOAQUINS--two daily round-trips--at the end of FY '84 if they fail the 55% criteria, as many observers believe they will."

* * *

The outrageous action of cutting the SPIRIT out of the state budget represents no less than a dictatorial action of one powerful individual, acting at the behest of the massive Southern Pacific, in response to campaign contributions. The people of the state wanted the train kept, and their legislators voted it into the budget. But alas, the governor was able to counter their wishes and to undo their work.

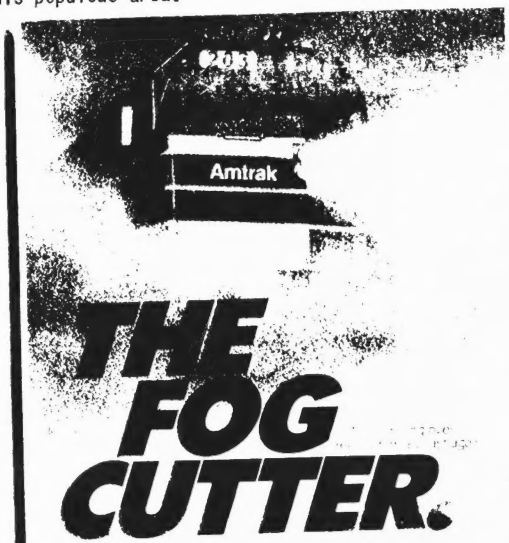
It's doubtful that the governor cares about one mode of transportation versus another. His actions represent merely the mechanical motions of a politician playing out his role. But they have untold ill effects upon the people of the state, and even of the nation. RTN's Adron Hall went thru the Airline Guide and counted 220 airline flights daily in the Bay Area-Los Angeles corridor (not including Sacramento, also served by the SPIRIT). Add to that the inumerable highway trips made daily between

The inaugural run of the as-yet unnamed SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA pulls southbound out of Oakland on Oct 22, 1981. First run was in daylight hours for benefit of media schedules. RTN photo.

these population centers, and it becomes clear that the people are asking for very little in wanting one night train in addition to the existing day train as transportation alternatives for this populous area.

Loss of the train will hurt not only rail passengers, it will hurt Amtrak. The SAN DIEGANS will lose some ridership, as outlined by NARP in its release, above. More pressure for space will be put on the already-crowded COAST STARLIGHT, costing Amtrak business when riders must be turned away from it. Any decrease in flexibility of scheduling will mean an overall system-wide loss of ridership. A one-million dollar Federal contract to Amtrak Package Express is carried by the train, and will be lost to Amtrak.

All avenues of state support at the present are apparently closed. In light of this, Amtrak should take the following two steps: (1) Declare the train part of the Amtrak system, perhaps on an experimental basis, thus taking over funding from the state. (2) Extend the train's operation to Reno, Nevada. Addition of the train to the (permanent) Amtrak system would not be adoption of a new route, but only an increase in frequency.



Graphics from one of the few ads ever run for the SPIRIT. Intended originally as a SAN JOAQUIN ad, this one was converted at the last minute into a SPIRIT newspaper ad. Most Californians still don't know that an overnight Northern-Southern California passenger train exists.

Extension of the train into Nevada would take pressure off the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR and add to flexibility of passenger scheduling and thus increased ridership in general. Dropping of the train now would mean that another extended and expensive period of negotiation with Southern Pacific would be required in the future when it was necessary to reinstate overnight service.

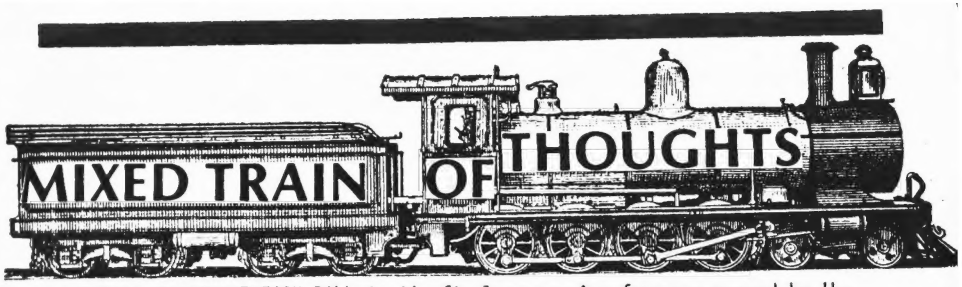
Rail supporters frequently point to the parallel between the West Coast and East Coast overnight trains--the SPIRIT and the NIGHT OWL. Both are equally justifiable as part of the permanent Amtrak system, and should be retained as essential elements of it.

A footnote of advice to rail travelers: Rountrip fares on the SPIRIT are cheaper than on the COAST STARLIGHT, as the former was exempt from Amtrak's fare increase of June 1.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

You may have noticed that this issue of RTN is somewhat abbreviated. We decided to put out a shorter issue in order to stay on schedule despite our staff vacation time, the last week of July.

On page 19 of this issue you will find a Reader Train Rating Form which you may use now to submit ratings of trains you have ridden since April 23. You do not have to submit the actual form from the magazine--you can make your own form up as long as you follow our format. Results will be published as soon as possible after Oct 30.



FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION BILL in its final compromise form was passed by the House on Aug 3 and sent to Reagan, who said he would sign it. The $10.9 billion appropriations bill includes $716.4 million for Amtrak, the same amount that the Senate had worked up. Mass transit gets $400 million for new rail systems--L.A., Portland, Miami, Detroit and San Jose. NE Corridor improvement gets $100 million...

THE FLORIO SUBCOMMITTEE on Jul 28marked out a bill that threatens the most heavily-used Phila-Harrisburg "sunset commuter trains". Apparently Florio was hitting back at Rep. Coughlin for opposition to the Atlantic City service. On Aug 3 & 4 the House Commerce Committee considered the bill, but after a stormy session it adjourned until mid-Sept with no final action on it. The Committee did throw out Florio's requirement that Amtrak continue serving St. Petersburg. St. Pete Congressman Bill Young was reported stunned by this lack of support. (At the Jul 20 Amtrak Board meeting, the St. Pete question was put off until the Sep 21 meeting.)..

AMTRAK PRESIDENT CLAYTOR said at the Jul 20 Board meeting that agreement had been reached with the Amtrak Service Workers' Council to establish a position of Auto-Train Attendant, a person qualified in all on-board service functions who can be called upon to do any one of them during a trip. Claytor also said that June ridership was up 7.5% overall, and revenues were up 7%.....

THE STATE HOUSE, Amtrak train 301, hit a van-type truck near Wilmington IL at 9:55am on Jul 28 and derailed. Ignoring flashing signals, the truck driver moved onto the tracks and was seriously injured in the resulting crash. There were 102 passengers aboard, and about 18 were injured seriously enough for hospitalization, while "dozens" of others had minor injuries. The conductor had two cracked ribs. The train was traveling at 75mph in a 79mph zone. Locomotive 311 derailed but remained upright ($100,000 damage); Amcoach 20021 derailed and leaned sharply to the left ($175,000); Amcoach 21127 derailed and turned on side to left of tracks ($175,-000); Amcoach 21157 likewise ($100,000). Track damage was about $10,000. The body of the van was wrapped around the engine windshield like a blindfold. Passengers said there was no panic, and everyone helped out in the rescue operation, especially passengers Rich Rutledge and Terry Weber, who lifted many passengers out of the overturned rearmost car.....

AMTRAK STATION CLOSURES: An Amtrak Jul 8 memo agreed on the following action on station cutbacks (see last issue): Unman the following: Camden SC, Cut Bank MT, Dodge City KS, Effingham IL, Elyria OH, Hamlet NC, Kissimmee FL, Lynchburg VA, Montpelier Jct VT, Niagara Falls NY, Prince WV, St. Albans VT, Southern Pines NC, Temple TX, Tri-State KY, Waterbury VT and Winslow AZ; Reduce hours: Canton OH, Hastings NE, Lima OH, and Texarkana TX; Consider reducing hours: Edmonds WA and Longview TX. Amtrak also plans to consolidate ticket sales in Sanford at the Auto-Train facility, and in McComb MS to review the situation after FY 84 and the World's Fair are over.....

NEW JERSEY GOVERNOR opposes Atlantic City service, having got the message only from the opposition, says NARP. NJ readers should send their view to him in c/o the State Capitol, Trenton NJ 08625.....

AUTO-TRAIN TERMINAL at Sanford FL restoration began on July 11 for Amtrak.....

MONROE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA is agreeing to buy the 100-mile Port Morris-Stanton ex-EL main line from Conrail for $6.6 million to preserve it for freight & psgrs...

AMTRAK LOW-LEVEL CAR engineering specs are to be sent out in August.....

NICE-PARIS NIGHT TRAIN derailed on Jul 25 at the exit of the Barbentane Station yard in the south of France. Among the fatalities were four young women from Ottawa, Canada. The victims were traveling, apparently in a sleeper, just behind the locomotive. The wreck may have been caused by a broken axle. The wrecked car lifted up, hit a catenary part, which ripped open the roof, and the following car also derailed, at a speed of 140 km/h. Firemen and police were on the scene from Avignon and Chateaurenard within 10 minutes.....

SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY on Jul 21 reported second quarter net income (unaudited) of $391.2 million, or $6.93 a share, compared with $30.7 million, or 55¢ a share for the same period last year. Most of SP's largesse was due to the completed sale on Jun 15 of its two communications subsidiaries to GTE Corporation.....

KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN officials labelled as "rumor" a Wall Street Journal article that said KCS was a prime candidate for merger with CSX Corporation.....

★ ★ ★

SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA has been cut out of the state budget by Gov. Deukmejian in spite of the fact that the state's transportation budget is enormously increased by higher revenues from state and federal gasoline taxes and other fees. The budget is $2.2 billion higher than last year, and most of that will go into building of new highways and maintenance of old ones. California gets $300 million more per year because of the new 5¢ per gallon federal gasoline tax. The state's Transportation Commission in July adopted a five-year improvement program totalling $12.1 billion. Fully $5.2 billion of that will go for new highways. Public transit gets only about $500 million. And the state can't afford one overnight train between Northern and Southern California! Amtrak's computer now shows the last run of the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA to be Sep 30. But train supporters are not giving up yet; The state of Nevada, NARP and Citizens for Rail California are pushing to obtain Federal funding for the train. The United Transportation Union is lobbying the state's senators and assemblymen to override the governor's veto of SPIRIT funds. A two-thirds majority vote would be needed to do that.....

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: The sixth line from the bottom of page 15 of last issue should read "Maybe Amtrak should start hauling milk cars, comments a reader"...

BALTIMORE & POTOMAC Tunnel in Baltimore, the scene of many NE Corridor bottleneck jamups, is being improved by Amtrak. However, the work will only prevent the tunnel from deteriorating, it won't allow increasing the present 30mph passenger train speed (20mph for freights). Details of the work are in the July issue of Railway Track and Structures magazine.....

★ ★ ★

DURANGO AND SILVERTON Narrow Gauge Railroad is installing a special car for the handicapped; it should be running by now. The car has two removable seats and two hydraulic door-mounted lifts for handling wheelchairs. Construction on the car, which was built from scratch, began last winter.....

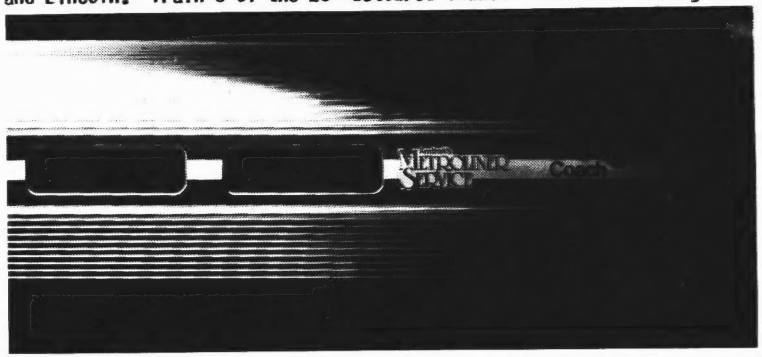
STATE RAILWAY OFFICIALS National Conference in Portland, Maine on Jul 27 were told by David A. Fink, chairman of the Maine Central and Boston & Maine that he will request money of Congress to study the extension of Amtrak service north from Boston to Portland.....

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA OFFICIALS are supporting the idea of using SP track between Monterey and Pacific Grove for a light rail line, and have been negotiating with SP to buy it, even tho the rails and ties have already been sold to an Oakland dismantler and the courts have upheld the right of SP to remove the track. Unfortunately, the city of Pacific Grove and the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, who along with Monterey are the three parties to the Joint Powers Agency to develop the right of way, are not interested in a light rail line there.....

DECATUR, ILLINOIS'S "DISINTEREST" in the ILLINI was what really caused the demise of that leg of the train (last runs the weekend of July 9), reports Crain's Business..

THE SOVIET UNION said in a July 29 official report that it will begin operating a 125mph train on the Moscow-Leningrad route. The electric train, the ER-200, is now undergoing test runs.....

VANDALS PILED ROCKS between the rails ahead of the westbound EMPIRE BUILDER two miles west of Browning MT under a highway overpass on Jul 28. The train hit the rocks and the fuel tanks of both engines, #301 and 219, were ruptured. BN freight units 6574 and 6480 were substituted to Spokane. With no electric power, the dining crew picked up sandwiches at Glacier Park to feed the passengers. On the same day, a BN freight derailed on the Galesburg Division just west of Melrose. The CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, train 5 of the 27th, detoured via West Quincy, Kansas City, Table Rock and Lincoln. Train 6 of the 26th detoured Council Bluffs to Chicago on CNW.....



THE ABOVE PHOTO, taken at Baltimore MD by Gary Zeitler, shows the new lettering on Amfleet cars used in Metroliner service, as detailed on page 8. Sign on side of coach reads "Amtrak's Metroliner Service".....

★ ★ ★

A TRAGIC INCIDENT was witnessed by RTN's Peter Bretz in the diner of train 6, the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, on May 17 as the train crossed Wyoming. About 11:35am, as the diner was full of late breakfasters (long waits for service were still the rule then), an elderly man suddenly keeled over from what later was known to be a heart attack. An Amtrak man examined him and then called for medical help on the P.A. system. Two nurses who were in the adjoining lounge car rushed in, ordered the man placed on his back on the floor, and began Emergency Medical Treatment, which included pumping on his chest. The dining crew asked patrons to leave the car. Soon the train stopped at Green River, close to noon, where a paramedic truck was arriving. After it, an ambulance, fire truck and police cars arrived. A decision had to be made on how to remove the victim from the diner. The conductor vetoed the idea of removing a window and lowering him thru it. The stairs were too narrow and twisting, for the man had to be kept horizontal so chest massage could continue. Finally, the idea was hit upon to separate the train and remove him thru the end door. The diner was uncoupled from the lounge behind it, and the front of the train moved ahead ten feet, leaving a gap between the cars. The man, on a stretcher, was lowered to the ground thru the open door at the end of the diner. The victim unfortunately was pronounced dead later at a hospital.....

"ECONOMY TWINETTE CARS" which operate in Australia on long distance standard-gauge trains such as the GHAN Trans Australian and Indian Pacific were praised by Rolland Graham, President of Mountain Outin' Tours in Southern California. "They seem to be exactly what Amtrak is looking for--high-capacity, low-level cars for overnight travel. The cars were built by Commonwealth Engineering under Budd license between 1967 and 1972, and appear very similar in dimensions to our cars. All cars are head-end powered with 440v provided by a power car. The cars have 17 economy twinettes sleeping 34 people total. Configuration of the room is similar to the

Superliner economy bedroom except that there is also a wash basin in the room and the beds and room appointments are more conveniently located. Passengers made up the rooms at night. In addition to the 17 rooms, there are two rest rooms, two showers, a porter's room with small kitchen for coffee making, etc., and generous linen cabinets. There are no upper berth windows, tho. Instead of re-inventing the wheel, so to speak, I seriously wonder if anyone from Amtrak has reviewed the configuration of these cars before a decision was made to start from scratch with new prototypes, with the attendant cost and delay in procuring new equipment which is desperately needed".....

THE FEDERAL DOT on July 27 announced that the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences has initiated a comprehensive study of the benefits and costs of the 55mph national highway speed limit. A 19-member panel chaired by Dean Alan A. Altshuler of NYU will deliver a report on conclusions and recommendations to the DOT and Congress in August 1984. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is funding the study.....

★ ★ ★

BULLETIN!
As we go to press, the California state senate has scheduled a vote for Aug 15 to try to override the veto on SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA funds. NARP said that Jun ridership was 26% above 1982, and early July was showing the highest month in the train's history. This coincided with NARP and CRC-funded ads. Both senate and assembly need 2/3 majority votes. Californians should call or telegram their state legislators at once instructing them how to vote.

CASEY JONES'S DESCENDANTS are holding a family reunion in Jackson TN Aug 12-14...

THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC placed a $1200 per rail car surcharge on freight shipments on the Northwestern Pacific Railroad as of Jul 18 as a means of eliminating traffic on the line. The move worked, as reportedly traffic came to a standstill. The SP is expected to file for abandonment by Sep 1.....

JAPANESE NATIONAL RAILWAYS will be split into seven private companies, according to present plans, with completion date for the change July 1987.....

PENNSYLVANIA REPUBLICAN CONGRESSMAN Lawrence Coughlin, an important member of the House committee on Amtrak funding, was an hour late for a speech in Philadelphia on Jul 11 because his Amtrak train from Washington was late.....

MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE Commission has expressed opposition to planned Amtrak station closures at Cut Bank and Shelby, and the closures have been reportedly tabled..

News in this issue is updated thru Aug 5, 1983.

JINXED AGAIN! (continued from page 9)

when he did. What if he had been up ahead for any valid reason? No one ahead of our car knew anything was wrong. The porter was cowering on the floor, so he wasn't going to take charge. Almost as soon as I left the bathroom I had headed for the emergency brake cord. If the brakeman hadn't shown up, I would have pulled the cord to stop the train. What would have been the consequences? Would I have been thrown off the train at the next station, perhaps put in jail--or would I have been a hero? Would I have caused more damage, or might I have saved the day? How much longer should I have waited for a crewman? I surely wasn't going to the upper level of the car to search for one, and no way on earth was I going to move between cars! A sudden stopping of the train might have caused injuries to someone--would I have been subject to lawsuits? But if I didn't stop the train, we could have derailed at full speed. In other words, just what were my rights and responsibilities in the situation? I have written Mr. Claytor asking these questions. It will be very interesting to see what he says.

CARS & CONSISTS

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*SAN DIEGAN, train 576, Santa Ana Jul 14: engine 222; cars 21151, 21192, 20036, 21253, 21265.

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, San Jose Jul 20: engines 322, 283; cars 1266, 39930, 31014, 31018, 34076, 34095, 34073, 33016, 38022, 32055, 32048, private car 28 "Jo-Vi-La."

*MANHATTAN LTD, train 180, New York Jul 25: engine 938 (AEM); cars 21079, 21108, 20047, 21106, 21067, priv cars "Venice", 3344 observation.

*EAGLE, train 22, Jul 17: engines 305, 373; cars 1211, 2989 "Pine Fern", 39907, 38004, 34014, 34006, 34034, 39970 Hi-level lounge, 32052.

*MONTREALER, train 61, New York Jul 24: engines 910, 929 (AEM); cars 1231, 3222 "Palm Beach" private car, 2053, 2890, 2056, 28303, 21208, 21131, 28300, 21882, 25075, 4617, 21005, 28014, 1230.

*PALMETTO, train 89, New York Jul 24: engine 965 (E60); cars 1262, 4645, 4646, 4705, 4644, 3108, 4619, 4740, 4728, 4648, 20019, 21111, 21234, 21249, 21053.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Aug 19, Sep 23, Oct 21: Montreal Mystery Express. NY-Montreal RT on MONTREALER & ADIRONDACK. Whodunit mystery enacted aboard. Up Fri, back Sun. $350 ea double occup. Mystery Express, 28 Waverly Pl, Madison NJ 07940. 212-690-0955.

Sep 24 & Oct 1: Autumn Leaf Festival train to Leavenworth WA; lv Seattle 8:30am. $44. Port Orchard Travel, 738 Bay St, Port Orchard WA 98366. 206-876-7292.

Send large SASE when responding to listings. One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Rail service in this country is designed to be subsidized for the needs of the American people and not for the needs of world travelers or American tourists. This is simply to hold them fiscally accountable for the justification of removing service from Wyoming."

--Wyoming Senator Malcolm Wallop, after successfully cutting Amtrak's budget by $1.6 million, quoted in Casper (WY) Star Tribune, July 16.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"The Denver & Rio Grande recently sold its Denver-to-Salt Lake City line, on which the old California Zephyr ran from 1949 to 1970, to Amtrak."

--Dagmar Obereigner of AP in Hayward (CA) Daily Review, Jul 17.

(And who paid for the new tunnel?)

"'The Pinkerton,' a new passenger car, was christened on Saturday after being rebuilt in the car barn. The car, numbered 270, was originally built in 1380 in Wilmington, Del."

--Chip Hinds in Durango (CO) Herald, Jun 29.

(America's oldest passenger car!)

EXPRESS ADS

AMTRAK - VIA RAIL CANADA - EURAIL PASS - OCEAN LINER CRUISES - RAIL TOURS - RAIL EXCURSIONS - CHARTER RAIL CARS. Arrangements by phone or appointment - use your credit card - Tickets mailed promptly. A fully appointed travel agency with masters of ship and rail travel. GREAT WESTERN TOURS, Sheraton Palace Hotel, Suite 900, 639 Market Street, San Francisco CA 94105. (415) 398-2994.

DINING CAR CHINA, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports. Many railroads. Long 37¢ stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213. Will buy items.

RAILROAD INFORMATION. 5-7 pages of NEW ENGLAND model railroad shows, railfan days, tourist railroad and rail excursion schedules. Send $3.00 for 4 issues (75¢ for sample issue) to RAILROAD INFORMATION, 77 Horne St., Dover NH 03820.

GLACIER RAIL HOLIDAY, five summer departure dates, fully escorted all-inclusive tours, using privately owned railroad cars. For additional information, contact Rio Vista Railways, PO Box 19992, Los Angeles, Calif. 90019. (213) 231-8442. Pay by check or credit card. Tickets sent to you by certified mail.

NORTHERN PACIFIC R.R. CENTENNIAL commemoration - Aug 25-28, Deer Lodge MT. Original 1880's Steam Locomotive in Operation. Re-enactments of 1883 Final Spike Ceremony. Displays, Exhibits, Pageant, Commem. Buckle & Coin. Write or call: Last Spike Centennial Committee, Box 149, Deer Lodge MT 59722. (406) 846-1004.

Boston & Maine, Frisco and Pennsylvania uniform button blazer sets, 2 large, 6 small, $5.95 or all three $15.95. Joseph Lajoie, Box 3, Methuen MA 01844.

LARGE RAILROAD CHRISTMAS CARDS from as low as $2.41 dozen, delivered. PREDDY'S CARDS, Box 572, Point Roberts WA 98281-0572. Free sample. Canadian $ at par.

GREAT TRAIN JOURNEYS OF THE WORLD tour packages available. Foreign adventure on seven exotic itineraries, from $3699 including air. Britain, India, China, etc.--some steam-hauled segments. Call Ted or Sylvia Blishak, Accent on Travel, and ask for Pan Am Holiday 800 brochure.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads cost just $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads are only $1.25 per square inch. RTN, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

Rate The Trains

RTN is resuming its train rating surveys. You can submit your ratings now on regularly-scheduled North American passenger trains (not commuter) that you have personally ridden since April 23, 1983.

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate each train on each of the 11 categories (A-K) listed below: (A) Your overall impression of the train, taking everything into account; (B) Service from operating crew (conductor, etc.); (C) Dining or snack crew service; (D) Lounge crew service; (E) Food quality; (F) Car mechanical condition; (G) Car cleanliness and housekeeping; (H) Condition of track & roadbed; (I) Desirability of train's schedule; (J) Condition of stations: (K) Appropriateness of type of equipment used.

Use the 9-point rating scale below. Do not use previous rating forms, as we have changed some of the categories. Put ratings on separate sheet from other correspondence.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9

Extremely poor ... Average, acceptable ... Extremely good

RTN'S TRAIN RATING FORM

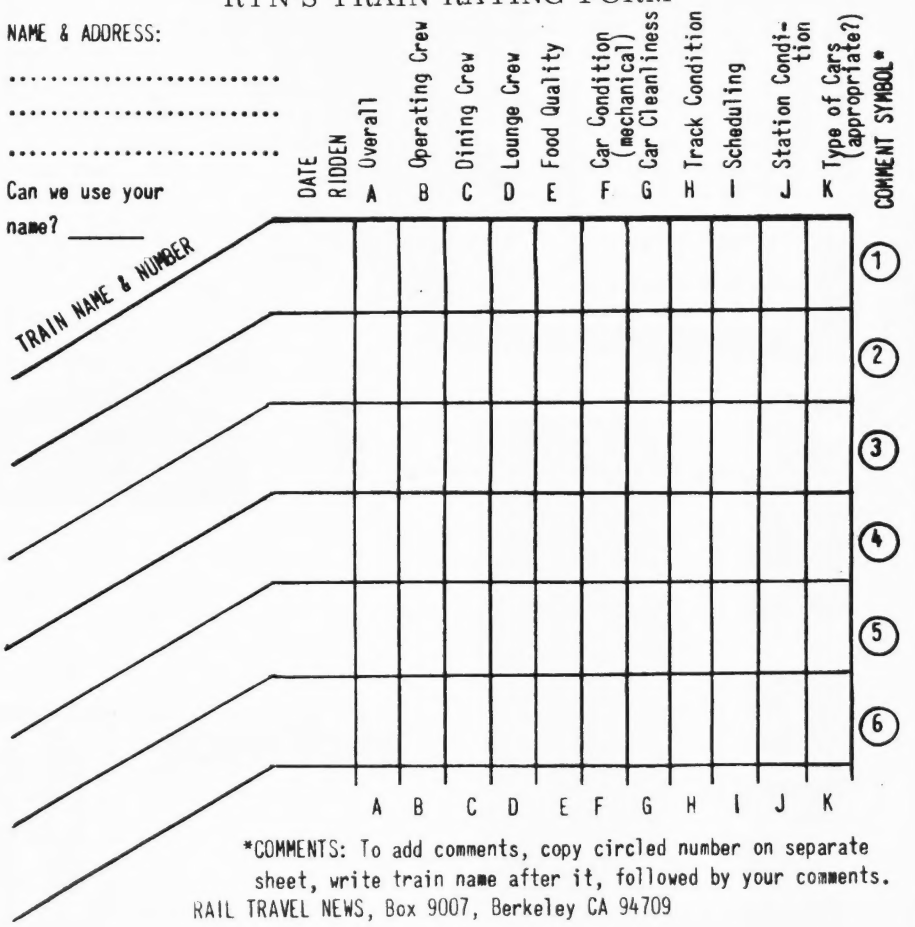
NAME & ADDRESS:

.....

.....

.....

Can we use your name? _____



*COMMENTS: To add comments, copy circled number on separate sheet, write train name after it, followed by your comments.

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709